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Volunteers in the  
National Forests

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# Techniques of Supervision

NUMBER

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United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service



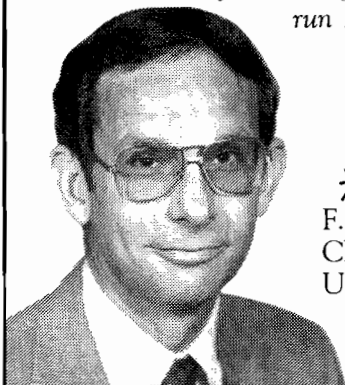
Hi, I am Dale Robertson, Chief of the Forest Service. I want to take a few minutes to tell you about one of the most important jobs in the Forest Service—the supervision of people.

A supervisor has direct influence on productivity and performance. More supervisors fail for lack of ability to deal with people than for lack of technical skills. Effective supervision depends primarily on the ability to get employees to do what you want them to do with enthusiasm.

With volunteers, enthusiasm is built in and the supervisor's role is to nurture, sustain and integrate it with technical know-how and administrative skills.

This booklet has some ideas and techniques that you may find helpful in working with your volunteer program.

You are the key to making the organization run smoothly.



*F. Dale Robertson*  
F. DALE ROBERTSON  
Chief  
USDA Forest Service

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## Acknowledgement

The information in this publication comes from a paper written by Jerry Greer, former Ranger, Sandia District of the Cibola National Forest.

Jerry's paper stems from his experience with the volunteer program on the Sandia Ranger District. While there are many Districts throughout the National Forest System that have had excellent programs involving volunteers, this Unit's experience was outstanding. If you desire additional information regarding programs of other units, see the reference section in the back of this booklet.

# Techniques of Supervising Volunteers

## Purpose

This fieldbook relates to supervision of Forest Service volunteers, how to compensate them and tips for administration of a successful program.

## A Review of Supervision

The supervision process accomplishes a task through a team effort with a team leader. Supervision requires communication; that is, it is a two-way process. Actions of the team leader must result in desirable reaction on the part of the employee or Volunteer.

Challenges in supervision will always come up because we are human. Anticipate solutions—"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." The task of managing and supervising paid employees and Volunteer workers is basically the same but there are some differences which will soon be obvious.

One of the most significant differences is that Volunteers are not paid in money. Use innovative ways to "pay" them. This process is simply a way of fulfilling human needs. It is an area of serious potential problems and later we'll review it in depth.

### **Techniques and Details; Supervision — A Team Approach**

Strive for overall success. A good attitude and an honest desire for improved management are especially important in the supervision of Volunteers.

*First*, we will review some challenges that are encountered anywhere in supervision and management.

*Second*, we will review challenges which may not be entirely unique to the Volunteer program, but which are very important to consider.

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**“Lead your people, don’t manage them. Direct your people, don’t control them.”**

Peter Drucker; *Management*

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# Common Supervisory Challenges

This group of challenges is important in the Volunteer management field because volunteers come to work for all reasons *except* for the need for a paycheck. Therefore, a reorientation of thinking must occur to disregard the paycheck normally emphasized and to regard all of the other reasons people work.

A paper, "Motivations of Forest Service Volunteers," by Glenn E. Haas, Assistant Professor in the College of Forestry and Natural Resources at Colorado State University attributes the following reasons why people volunteer for the Forest Service: "To enjoy the scenic beauty, to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature, to be able to work outdoors and to experience the peace and tranquility of nature." A predominant theme threaded throughout the 10 most important motives relates to the desire to enjoy and work in a natural environment. Other themes threaded throughout the 20 most important motives relate to socializing with new and different people, learning and having a change from one's day-to-day personal and social pressures.

While more volunteers want to feel they are part of the "Forest Service team" and most managers want to treat volunteers as part of the "Forest Service



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team," this should not be construed to mean that working with volunteers is the same as permanent employees. Volunteers are seeking a quality experience while permanent employees are seeking such rewards as financial security in addition to a quality experience. Managers need to ask prospective volunteers why they want to volunteer and the type of experience they are hoping for. This simple action will help to assure a quality volunteer experience; that is, the benefits accruing to the volunteer will exceed the costs.

### **Lack of Enthusiasm**

Since Volunteers come to work for all these other reasons, it is critical that they see and feel enthusiasm for their work. Get a feel for this by thinking about personal experiences in work situations. Think of an enthusiastic supervisor and recall how this enthusiasm made you feel. Volunteers get the same feelings and these good feelings can form part of an excellent foundation for an entire program.

### **Poor Atmosphere**

There is more to a good atmosphere than enthusiasm. We can agree that atmosphere in the workplace is important to all of us. The difference is that paid people will "stick it out"; Volunteers will quickly leave. The atmosphere of an organization is made up of many parts including guidance, encouragement, care, concern, support, and recognition of personal value and acceptance. A good atmosphere will encourage Volunteers to contribute and de-

velop. Work relationships with Volunteers must be based on mutual respect.

## **Clear Chain-of-Command**

Chain-of-command, not in the strict military sense, but in the sense of saying, "Who is in charge of me" or "Who cares about how I am doing?" All employees and Volunteers must know who will be giving them direction. They must know to whom they should report problems or ask questions. We tend to make this very clear with paid employees but it is apparently easy to overlook this with Volunteers. A clear chain-of-command is even more important to Volunteers because the agency-Volunteer relationship is one based entirely on human values.



### **Total Staff Involvement**

This is mostly a matter of communications with appropriate paid staff. To avoid any adverse effects from staff officers, encourage their involvement in the planning process.

### **Sufficient Funding**

Volunteer programs are not free. Volunteers receive no salary but the proper management of a program does cost money. Costs can be paid by either the agency or the Volunteers, but in a successful program, cost must be anticipated and paid. Funds are needed for equipment, training, travel and recognition.

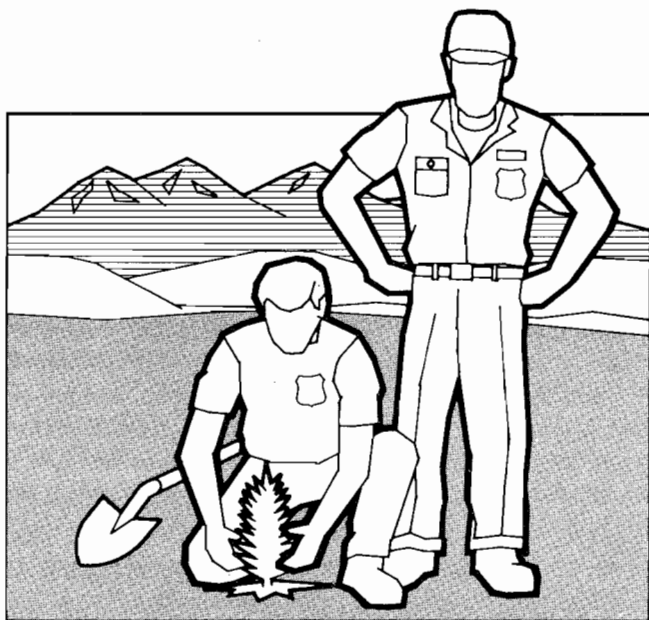
### **Sufficient Program Management Time**

Successful Volunteer programs are characterized by the obvious attention managers give to the program. Allocate sufficient time to the program to insure it is well planned. It is equally important to devote a significant amount of time to “pay” Volunteers in terms of recognition. Time devoted to these activities will produce results.

### **The Importance of Good Supervision**

Much of this fieldbook concerns challenges and opportunities for a supervisor or team leader. Ade-

quate training in supervision and leadership roles pays off. Remember that paid employees will endure a poor supervisor. Volunteers will not; they leave.



# Special Opportunities in Supervision and Management

The *second* group are details which are either specific to or are very important in the management of a Volunteer program. This list contains challenges, opportunities and some specific procedures.

## Support from Entire Team

It is important that everyone in the work group or unit support the Volunteer program. Get enthusiastic support or at least positive acceptance. Involve paid staff even though Volunteers are not working in their specific area or subunit. Keep all members of the group informed about success, opportunities, special challenges and program direction. Emphasize the Volunteer program as a team effort.

Much can be done in this area before a Volunteer program is begun. Prepare paid employees by working them into the program. Be open and enthusiastic. Give strong support to those who will supervise Volunteers.

It is critical to achieve a balance of attention between paid workforce and a Volunteer group. The importance of maintaining this balance of attention and support increases as the size of a Volunteer

group increases. To appear to favor one group over the other could present unneeded challenges.

What happens when Volunteer managers quit, “retire,” or go on long vacations? This hazard may be avoided in part by getting a firm time commitment from the volunteer. More discussion follows, but remember that a clearly defined termination date will not be a surprise. Plan well and keep in touch with the program. Be prepared to take over in the event a critical manager leaves.

Use paid staff for basic program management, coordination and support. This is recommended because of the odious nature of the paperwork, reports and plans required to implement the program.

## **Program Pitfalls**

Ineffective management, poor supervision, and negative attitudes all combine to make an unworkable program. Although each of these facets can separately drive Volunteers away, together they can do worse. If a program is truly deficient, Volunteers will get disillusioned and leave with ill feelings.

Volunteers are members of an informal group and they will share their feelings. The reputation of the unit will be damaged and the agency will be much worse off. *If you can't do it well, don't do it at all.* A poor Volunteer program can have serious, lingering results.

### **The Need for Program Publicity**

Most Volunteer programs currently in operation are unique. Vocal managers create awareness through publicity. The ones heard about are not the only excellent ones in existence. Program publicity is important because it supports and helps the program grow. It generates a broad base of public support. Volunteers will constitute an informal subgroup in the unit. All such groups need attention and recognition to survive as a group. Program publicity will bring attention to and recognition of the group.

### **Facilities for Volunteers**

Have preparations occurred to accept the services of Volunteers? Is there a place for them to work, supplies for the job? Would a paid employee be hired without making these arrangements? Before a Volunteer comes to work, be sure to have an office, a desk or a work station ready. Have an answer to the Volunteer's question, "Where do I work?" At the minimum, have a plan where the Volunteer can help which will result in a work place. The situation is simple, *be prepared*.

# Misconceptions about Volunteers

## Volunteers Threaten Paid Jobs

One fear which becomes a threat to a program's success may be the perception by paid employees that Volunteer's may put them out of work. To get the feeling of total support from paid staff may be easy. After all, it's "free" labor, who would object? However, remember the employees may perceive the Volunteer program as a threat to their job security. People with these strong fears can destroy an otherwise good program. Counter these fears by early involvement of all employees. A continuing process of updating, continued assurances to the contrary and positive reinforcement and support of paid staff will help.

## Volunteers Are Outsiders

Paid employees can effectively band together to exclude the people who offer to work without pay. If kept separate from the paid workforce, Volunteers can easily become useless and counterproductive. The atmosphere created can help correct this. Advance involvement of paid employees will prevent this separatism. Be sure to mix Volunteers in with the team. Let Volunteers know often they are valuable, that they are important, and that their ideas and suggestions are welcome. Include Volunteers in

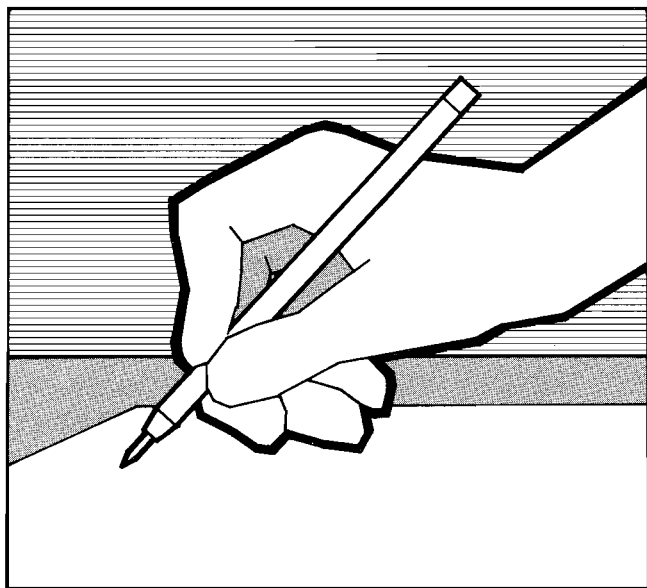


staff meetings as appropriate, in outside activities, in trips, tours and training.

### **Volunteers Can't Be Depended Upon**

Volunteers *are* dependable. The Forest Service has had a record of excellent dependability with groups and individuals. These three pointers are offered to help insure or improve dependability. These tips are:

**Get a written commitment; make proper assignments to organized groups; and, make proper assignments to individuals.**



The written commitment to accomplish a task or job is not for any potential legal use. It's purpose is to communicate, to agree, to understand what is expected. You simply agree upon a program or project.

Making a proper assignment to a group improves success. Clubs and organizations are like the government in that they are most likely to continue through times of stress. Groups are more likely to succeed in long-term projects (such as construction) which require a substantial commitment.

Organized groups can be depended upon to get their members out for the work projects. Adopt-a-Trail program is a good example of how this can work. People doing the work may be different at each session, but the organization is always there meeting its commitment. Make an annual review to insure that the group wants to proceed, and commitment will follow.

It is best to assign individuals to projects which are of relatively short duration, are of limited scope, or have a clearly defined end point. There are certainly exceptions to this suggestion. A good relationship with individual Volunteers can be ruined unless a termination date or a renewal date is clearly agreed upon. Give Volunteers a place to graciously exit.

### **Volunteers Will Create Many Problems**

When the Forest Service Volunteer program really got underway, many comments were received from employees, and from people working in higher levels of the Forest Service. Most of these comments were good and helpful but several reflected an unreasonable fear of what Volunteers may do. "Volunteers may have bad accidents." "Volunteers may steal our equipment and supplies." "Volunteers may . . ." In fact, experience has shown that Volunteers cause no more problems than employees.

In fact, there is no evidence of any theft and only a moderate number of accidents have occurred in the program in thousands of hours of work. Fears about Volunteer behavior are usually not justified.

There is a risk of suffering some loss whether it be through employees or through Volunteers. The enabling legislation for both the Park Service and the Forest Service states that Volunteers are covered under worker compensation and under the Federal Tort Claims Act. Volunteers are no more a liability than are employees. Experience indicates they may be less of a risk. This fear in the unit can be countered by a show of confidence and operation of a successful program.

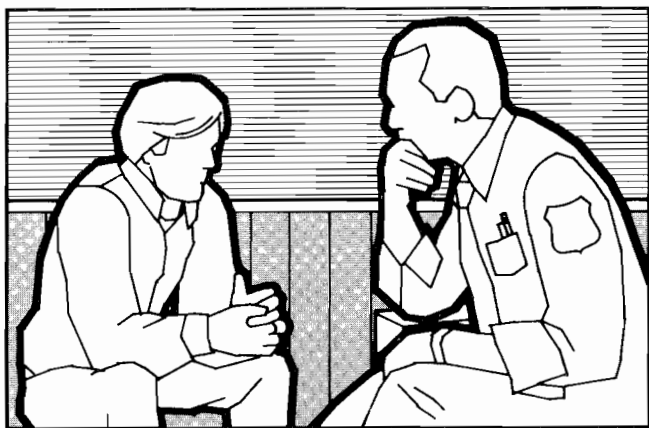
# Special Procedures & Techniques

## The Volunteer Interviews

To properly use Volunteers' talents, it is essential to know who s/he is and what s/he wants and expects. Failure to know Volunteers may result in difficulties in the program. This is a critical step in the effective use of Volunteers and can help avoid pitfalls in the program. The job interview for Volunteers, as for employees, needs to determine the individual's suitability for the job. Doing this step well will achieve a productive and successful program.

Suggestions for a successful Volunteer Interview:

1. Determine the capability of the person or group to do a necessary job to our standards. (Capability is a measure of skill).
2. Determine the apparent willingness of the person or group to complete the job or to continue with it for an acceptable time. (Willingness is a measure of desire).
3. Determine the Volunteer's time which is available and agree on a tentative schedule for work.
4. Obtain initial commitment to accomplish a task or objective. (This is certainly a part of willingness but we see the need to have the person or group representative make a positive statement of commitment).



5. Determine if there are problems or personal needs which should be considered. Some items are transportation arrangements, health or physical problems, mental or emotional limitations.
6. Determine why the person or group is volunteering. (This may be the most important step in the interview. It is vitally important to know the reasons for volunteering so we can properly reward their efforts. Proper rewards will maintain and increase the Volunteer's willingness to help).

## **No One Works for Free**

Even Volunteers expect some payment in return for their efforts. During the interview, find out why they volunteer. Knowing why allows us to determine how to properly reward their efforts. This point introduces compensation for Volunteers.

# **Volunteer Compensation and the Process of Recognition**

Volunteer compensation is simply a matter of give and receive. The Volunteer gives productive help and receives something in return. This “something” is called compensation.

To illustrate compensation, think for a moment about what is received, as a paid employee, for work performed. Compensation includes salary, life insurance, retirement, overtime pay, vacation leave with pay, paid sick leave, health insurance contribution and cash awards for good performance. Management trades money for work.

With Volunteers, their efforts cannot be rewarded with money, but there is a way of “paying” them. Look back to the Volunteer interview. During this process, it was determined why the person or the group is volunteering.

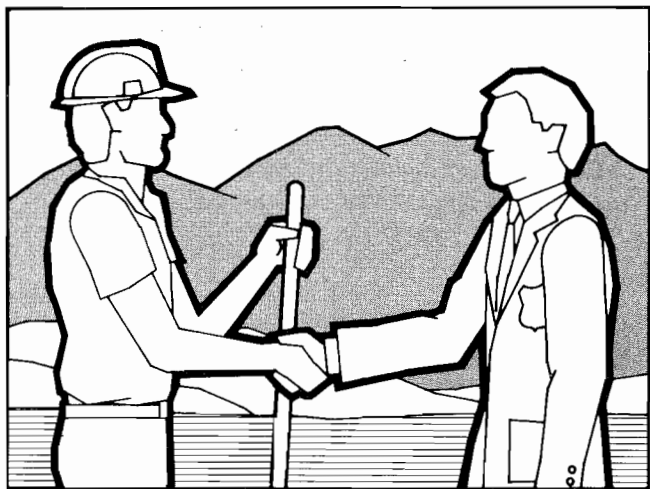
As previously stated, there are many reasons motivating people to volunteer. Refrain from placing Volunteers in any categories. Remember, each Volunteer may have a unique reason for volunteering and it is important to learn what it is.

Design a compensation package that allows for creativity and flexibility for each individual or each group. Fill their individual human needs. Knowing why people volunteer helps accomplish this goal.

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People enjoy public recognition for their efforts. This may be their primary motivator and it usually appears to be coupled with other reasons. This desire for recognition may be expressed clearly or it may be an unexpressed need. At Sandia District, Cibola National Forest, Tijearas, New Mexico, it is assumed that recognition is an important need and they try to give some to everyone.



The process of recognizing or compensating Volunteers is simple yet worth a regular review. Three parts of the recognition process are delineated as follows: *RECOGNIZER* (you); *RECOGNIZED* (Volunteer); *RECOGNITION* (the compensation given).

## **The Recognizer**

To be successful, be sincere, natural and honest. Without pretense, recognize others and give them credit for their work. By this time the reasons a person or group has volunteered are known. Be flexible and adapt to the needs of each person or group. It is essential that an honest desire exist for the Volunteer program to succeed.

## **The Recognized**

The individual or group has needs which must be fulfilled. They have unique needs which may not be easy to identify. All may enjoy recognition but some may not. The Volunteer must do something deserving of recognition or compensation. Their efforts need not be outstanding, just consistent and acceptable.

## **The Recognition**

The recognition given must be steady and meaningful. There are two kinds. Tangible forms of recognition or compensation include letters, certificates, gifts, books, jewelry, awards, and potluck dinners. Intangible forms include personal comments about a job well done, friendly gestures, praise, the offer of friendship, or simply remembering and saying the person's name. Some examples of other opportunities for recognition include: Statewide Volunteer recognition groups like those working out of Governors' offices; corporations with recognition programs; other government agency recognition; and,



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the recognition programs operated by Volunteer groups such as the Scout's merit badge program.

In recognizing or compensating Volunteers, tie the recognition to the value of the contribution made. Refrain from recognizing all contributions equally. A small job of limited importance deserves a little recognition. An outstanding job which has national significance deserves a large amount of recognition. It is very important to show each Volunteer comparatively how well they did. With salaried employees this is a fairly easy process. Simply give them a cash award based on the cash value of their contribution.

With Volunteers, rewards must be given without this easily calculated process. Methods not tied to dollars must be used. For a small project, congratulations or a note posted on a bulletin may be in order. For nationally significant projects, publicity on a national scale may be appropriate.

To try to match the value of contributions to the level of publicity, the following list will give you an idea of some of the options available.

1. National network television or radio news coverage
2. "Hour Magazine" or "60 Minutes" style TV program
3. Weekly national news magazines

4. Major newspapers (Washington Post; LA Times)
5. Internal newsletter published by an agency
6. General interest magazines (for example, Sunset Magazine)
7. Local news broadcast
8. Local newspaper articles
9. Limited employee newsletter
10. Congratulations and bulletin board notices

Letters, certificates of appreciation and other signed documents present an opportunity to tie the value of the Volunteer's contribution to people of social prominence. For example, a certificate to a group or person for a nationally significant project might deserve a letter from the President or Department Secretary. At the other extreme, a small project could be recognized by the Volunteer's supervisor. Projects of intermediate value could be tied to other people in intermediate positions. In other words, the value of the Volunteer's contribution can be recognized and equated to some level on a scale of social prominence. This scale can be illustrated by the following example:

1. President of the United States
2. Secretary of Agriculture or Interior
3. Cabinet members in various Departments

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4. Famous person in entertainment, sports, or conservation
5. Chief of the Forest Service, Director of Park Service
6. Washington Office Staff Officers
7. Regional Forester, Regional Supervisor, or Regional Directors
8. Deputy Regional Foresters & Directors
9. Forest Supervisors, Park or Monument Supervisors
10. District Rangers, Park Rangers
11. The Volunteer's supervisor

Neither of these scales is fixed, firm or permanent. Remember, this is done with the Volunteer's specific needs in mind. For example, recognition at the local level may be more important to a specific person than all the national publicity you could muster. In all cases, evaluate the contribution, evaluate the Volunteer, and tailor the reward to each case.

Compensate and recognize Volunteers for their efforts. Fill their needs for continuation of the Volunteer program. While doing this, balance awards and recognition between *paid staff* and *Volunteers*. Whether a little or a lot is done, be sure there is balance to the effort.

# Helpful Administrative Details

## Job Descriptions

A detailed job description will help both parties in an agreement understand what is expected. We suggest that every individual should have one. Groups should also have one and they should be equally clear.

## Training

Instruction and training can change or improve capability. Properly scheduled and performed, training helps morale and retains good Volunteers.



### **Risk Management, Safety and Accident Control**

Exemplify the same concern for Volunteers as for employees in a safety program. Train everyone to think safety. Have Health and Safety Guides available for all Volunteers. Inspect projects for safe work practices. Have safety meetings. Consider the safety of visitors and recreationists who may be in the area of Volunteer work crews. Remember that Volunteers are considered federal employees in matters of torts and compensation for work-related injuries.

Avoiding accidents will save time, paperwork and money. It will save others the pain and suffering which always accompanies accidents.

### **Attendance and Leave**

Most Volunteers like being treated as employees in this respect.

Know what hours a Volunteer will be working in order to effectively plan the work. Because our Volunteers are covered by Workman's Compensation, it is essential to know when a Volunteer is working on an assigned project. When a Volunteer's presence is required during certain hours (such as at an information station) be sure the Volunteer understands. Plan work hours so the job will be done.

## **Performance Appraisals**

It's the same for Volunteers as it is for paid employees. Compare performance with what is expected. This is normally a difficult task for management and it is easier if done frequently. Recognize and reward good work. Correct problems as you find them. Keep it all informal.

## **Conduct and Adverse Actions**

Be prepared to handle problems. Take quick action to keep things on track. Give people a chance to make corrections and help them to the extent you can. If difficulties cannot be satisfactorily corrected, the Volunteer must be transferred or terminated. Volunteers working in public contact positions must represent the agency to the same standards as employees do. Specify their conduct and expect appropriate actions.

Visitors and other "outsiders" will not know the difference between a working Volunteer and a working employee. Both must represent the agency equally well.

## **Nondiscrimination**

The law requires us to treat people equitably. Volunteers are recruited regardless of race, color, age, handicap, marital status. Just remember that *willingness* and *capability* are important; nothing else is.

# Summary

Hundreds of points have been covered in a very short time. In working toward a successful program, consider the range of the four following ideas.

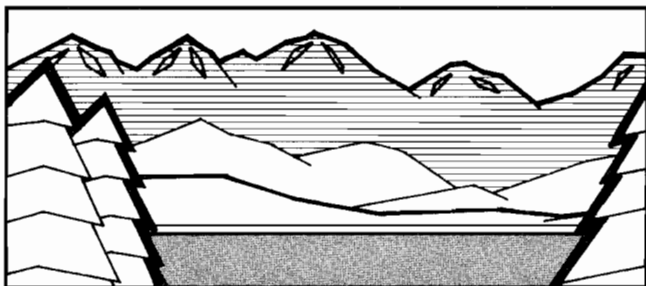
A. Volunteer programs do work. They contribute to our goals and they help the people who volunteer.

B. Pay attention to the Volunteer program and correct any difficulties as they occur.

C. Pay (or compensate) Volunteers in a way which fulfills their needs. Be sure Volunteers are recognized for their contributions.

D. Establish clear and open communications with paid staff and Volunteers and be sure they communicate with one another.

A little care and concern will go a long way toward managing a successful Volunteer program.



# References

1. District Ranger  
Sandia District  
Cibola National Forest  
Star Route Box 174  
Tijearas, NM 87059
2. District Ranger  
Boulder District  
Arapaho-Roosevelt NF  
2995 Baseline Road  
Boulder, CO 80303
3. District Ranger  
Pisgah National Forest  
P.O. Box 8  
Pisgah Forest, NC 28768
4. District Ranger  
Arroyo Seco District  
Angeles NF  
Oak Grove Park  
Flintridge, CA 91011
5. Forest Superior  
Superior National Forest  
Box 338  
Duluth, MN 55801

There are many other Forests and Districts across the National Forest System with outstanding programs that can provide you with help or assistance.



# Reference List

Supervisor Office: \_\_\_\_\_

District Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Services: \_\_\_\_\_

State Police: \_\_\_\_\_

Sheriff Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Fire State Forester: \_\_\_\_\_

Forest Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather Information: \_\_\_\_\_



### ***Gifford Pinchot***

*First Chief of the Forest Service*

"In setting up any piece of Service work, the first step was to find the right man and see that he understood the scope and limits of his work and just what was expected of him. That was not always easy. Here and there, of course, we made mistakes. But in nearly all cases the man chosen fitted his job and did it well.

"The next step was to give him his head and let him use it. Every man in an executive position ran his own show and took pride in it. Just as Secretary Wilson had given me power to choose the policies and personnel of the Division, just as you let a good horse pick his own way over rough ground, so each executive in the Service was put on his own to do the work for which he was responsible."

# Field Notes

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